

French Braid

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Summary: What's Gustav, a young viking, to do when he falls hopelessly in love with the eldest of four sisters from another nation? He learns how to braid her hair.

French Braid

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><p>Currently looking for Cover Art commissions.<p>

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><p>French Braid

Vikings weren't supposed to fall in love. Especially tough ones like Snotlout Jorgenson. But he wasn't a Jorgenson. He was a Larson. Gustav Larson, a child that no one took seriously. The Dragon Riders made him their apprentice (in so many words), but he still never really felt like he was a part of the team. His own mother had even pawned him off for a dragon egg that everyone falsely believed to be a Stone of Good Fortune. He would never turn out to be an unlikely hero like the chief's son, or simply even a Dragon Rider.

Maybe he was just Berk's mistake.

"Whoa, _whoa!_" he shouted, clutching onto the neck of his Monstrous Nightmare. The wind started to pick up, blowing too hard for either being to stay riding in the sky. He had never flown this far from the

island before. In the back of his mind, he knew he would get into serious trouble if anyone found out he had been training his dragon behind their backs. Though at the moment, he couldn't care less. He just wanted to find some ground before he lost control.

Down below, Gustav saw a small clearing in a wooded area. Carefully, he guided his companion to the ground. He caught a glimpse of civilization not too far from the woodland. Hopefully he could get some help with directions, and maybe even some food and shelter until the strong winds past.

The young viking dismounted his dragon, ushering it behind a large boulder. Tall trees grew around it, as if the perennial plant could claim the stone as its own. It made the perfect hiding spot for the beast.

"Stay here, Fanghook," he instructed in a voice no louder than a whisper. The dragon snorted in protest at the name. The boy chuckled, and agreed, "You're right, you need a name that better suits you. But for now, I need you to stay hidden in this forest while I gather some supplies."

The fire-breathing reptile nudged the boy's head as a show of affection, causing his horned helmet to tilt sideways. The boy laughed and wrapped his arms around his neck. "You know, I hate to say it, but I don't really miss you biting me..." The Monstrous Nightmare let out a small growl, showing his own way of laughing.

He tenderly pressed his head against his dragon's snout. "If I'm not back by nightfall tomorrow, then fly back to Berk to get help. You got it?" A snort was given as a reply. With a nod, the boy headed towards his destination.

Gustav walked through forest until his feet met the edge of a bridge that carried over a large body of water. The bridge connected to a village ahead. It was grand, and golden as the sun. The stonework was bright like the white sands along the shore of Berk, though purer than the natural elements he ever found on his island.

The viking of the Hairy Hooligan tribe weaved his way through the mass of bustling village people, busy with selling or buying goods. There was a handful of children running around the town. Many were his age and younger. Some danced to the street musicians, others stained the cobblestone with a powder substance in a variety of vibrant colors. Then there was one as tall as he was, standing by a fountain.

She was a sophisticated and spirited child, caring for the three younger girls who looked so much like her. He had never seen anyone so selfless before. For a while, he watched her braid the girls' hair, which stuck out in crazy places. Though unlike the rest of the girls' braids, her golden red hair was held together in one simple, yet elegant braid. It was so silky and shiny. Not a single strand was out of place.

It was in that moment when Gustav Larson was utterly, hopelessly in love.

He stayed in this kingdom that the townsfolk named Corona until after nightfall. The winds have calmed, in time for a special lighting

ceremony. It turned out that he had visited this place on a day of celebration. From what he gathered, it had been a year since the king and queen's daughter had returned after being kidnapped eighteen years before. The anniversary also coincided with the nineteenth birthday of, as she was referred to, the Lost Princess.

Through all of the joyful festivities that Gustav was exposed to that day, he saw her, the tenderhearted girl who stole his heart. She danced, ate cupcakes, and fed fruit to a wingless dragon who changed color to match every piece of food the creature ate. She braided people's hair as if it was her job, and every single customer left looking incredible and satisfied.

When dusk came, every townsfolk lit a lantern. The golden gleam each light emitted warmed the rosy hue in the girl's cheeks, and so did Gustav's just by staring at her. The glow really brought out her beauty. Up on the castle's balcony was the royal family, ready to release the first lantern into the sky. All floated like the stars, close enough to reach.

Gustav left once the last lantern came down for the night. His sack was filled with the items he needed for his travels, generously donated from the kind citizens of Corona. He crossed the darkened bridge without taking another glance back, for if he did, he knew he would never leave, and he knew he had to go back to Berk sooner or later.

As he flew through the calming night on the back of his dragon, Gustav couldn't get the image of the girl's round face, wide hazel eyes, and golden red french braid out of his memory. Every compassionate gesture she made with every being she had contact with was so clear in his mind. He realized... that he was too dumb to talk to her for the entire day, with all the chances in the world to do so. He didn't even know her name!

There was reason to go back to Corona now.

All the Dragon Riders wanted to question the boy's recent odd change of behavior. He took commands without objecting to any of them, he whistled and hummed happily to himself as he cleaned up after dragon droppings, and he even scolded Snotlout for his lack of gentleman-like manners.

"But we're vikings!" Snotlout argued, but Gustav was already skipping away from the Dragon Academy.

"Looks like Gustav is no longer loyal to Snotlout," Hiccup commented nonchalantly.

"Shut it, Haddock!" Snotlout snapped, obviously bitter by his disciple's rejection.

After a few days, Gustav's new attitude remained unchanged. The Dragon Riders were still concerned, but they decided to leave the matter alone. The boy seemed happy, and his performance in all of the tasks they have given him was outstanding. They really had no ground to complain. All they could do was keep a close eye on him.

Then one morning, he muttered a proposal to the Academy's second-in-command. He was careful to not let any of the other Dragon

Riders hear. This was for her ears only. It took a lot of convincing (well, okay, begging) on his part to get Astrid Hofferson to let him take a break from Dragon Training in favor of learning an entirely different kind of skill.

"You want me to do what?" she cried. Her arms were folded over her chest defensively, and her vivid blue eyes looked him over skeptically.

"Teach me how to braid hair," he pleaded, eyes tearing up with embarrassment.

Astrid looked away, thinking over the boy's appeal while she unconsciously touched her thick braid. Though she couldn't figure out the reason why a young boy wanted to learn such a task, she really didn't fight the matter. She decided to grant the boy's wish.

The golden braid came out, her hair blowing through the breeze as she combed and fluffed her hair in preparation for the unusual tutorial. She demonstrated on herself first, then combed out the braid once again for him to try. Slowly, she talked him through the process step-by-step. When he was finished, it resulted in the worst-looking braid to have ever been made in history, but he did it. He had made his first braid. Gustav tried the procedure again, and again, improving the method and technique with each attempt.

A piece of rope with the fiber strands all untwisted was given to him for his practice at home. He practiced for many days, many nights of frustration and exasperation. He was never going to learn how to braid! And win over the affections of an expert hair braider. It was hopeless, just like the hopeless infatuation that has befallen on him.

Then one day he did it. He did it! He mastered the technique of the perfect braid! And he had half of the Dragon Riders dressed up to show for it. Pretty floral plants graced Astrid's thick braid, and Ruffnut had metal trinkets intertwined in her polished pigtails. Even Tuffnut's braided mane had the bones of small rodents weaved in.

With Hiccup's help, Gustav crafted hair ornaments that was befitting to the girl he met in Corona. He went out into the forest to find wildflowers to add to the collection. Ribbons were harder to gather, but he managed to get some strips of cloths that made appropriate substitutes. He carefully placed the assortment in a handkerchief, and tied up the package. It was tucked safely in his sack for his journey tomorrow.

Gustav left Berk before the sun had risen, long before anyone else in the tribe had awoken. He snuck his dragon to the woods, and flew off on his back. Thankfully, no one had seen him. At least, not to his knowledge, but if someone did, then he would deal with the consequences later. His sights were set on Corona, and he expected to arrive there by midday.

He had his dragon land closer to the edge of the woods, though still hidden behind the trees. He doubted anyone around these parts have seen a dragon before, and he couldn't afford any harm to happen to his companion. Though coming to this kingdom once before, he felt a bit more comfortable leaving his dragon to somewhere a little more

accessible.

Gustav stepped up to the edge of the bridge, where the white cobblestone glistened in the sunlight, as well as the gleaming water that surrounded the bridge. The viking took a hesitant step forward. This was it. The first step that decided the rest of his young life. There was no turning back now, no matter how easy it was to freak out and run away. No, he was a viking! And vikings never ran away.

The village was still busy with people, but not perhaps not as much as there were during his last visit. The chalk drawings that graced the sidewalks were washed away, but new drawings surfaced. Merchants sold their goods in shops and carts. An offer delicious selection of produce was sent his way, but he had to decline. He was on a mission, after all, and he faced forward to continue walking down the path.

Then she was there, standing on the edge of the fountain, where the Lost Princess of Corona sat patiently while the young girl styled her hair. Though her majesty's locks were no longer golden or seventy-feet long, her brunette tresses were growing out enough for the adored child to fashion the flowing strands into a fancy upsweep.

"Thank you," the princess expressed her gratitude when the girl was finished, standing up and wrapping her arms around her. She given her a small, wrapped box. A gift, perhaps, though Gustav had no idea what could have been inside. Something valuable, he guessed, if the princess thought highly of the girl's work.

Gustav walked a steady pace up to the girl, until his presence was made known to the girl. Her head was turned curiously in his direction. She tried not to smile, staring at him with confusion, but Gustav could see something behind her eyes. The reflection of recognition of his face was shining in her hazel eyes. He could see a flicker of a smile wanting to come out.

"Ahem," he nervously cleared his throat. He held out an object to her in his hand. She stared at it, not sure what to make of it. Gustav flashed her a nervous smile, and explained, "It's for you, for your hair."

She continued to stare, still unsure of the sudden show of affection from this charming stranger. Lifting a finger, she traced it along the edge of a wildflower. "May I?" he asked, mimicking the motion of putting the object in her hair. She nodded, turning herself around so he could begin his task.

Carefully, he undid the ribbon that tied her golden red hair in her trademark french braid. Gently using his fingers to comb through the waves, every strand became loose. He stopped for a moment to stare at her, though he couldn't help it. He had never seen her hair down before. The warm, summer breeze blew through the silky curls. Hazel eyes curiously peered over her shoulder, silently wondering why he had stopped.

Gustav broke out of his trance. "S-sorry!" he gasped. "Y-you just look so beautiful." Her eyes widened. She held her hand to cover her mouth, and let out a small, surprised gasp.

"H-hold on," he instructed, his fingertips reaching for a section of her hair. He added the accessories he brought into her hair as he worked. Neither child exchanged a word while the boy concentrated on his task. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see her three younger sisters walk up to the scene. Their mouths and eyes were wide with fascination. Though Gustav didn't let himself get distracted by the crowd of on-lookers that he brought in.

"Done," he announced finally.

She raised her hand, cautiously touching the braided hair with delicate fingers. Her face sadden a bit, unable to see the creation. In the distance, Gustav could see the princess' dashing husband whistle for the peddler who sold hand mirrors. One was handed to the outsider, and he held it up in front of the girl's face. She smiled brighter than the sun.

The wrath he could have suffered from Astrid Hofferson was worth the risk.

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><p>End of French Braid

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><p>Author's Note: Here is a story for two fandoms that I am a part of, but never thought I would write for. My contribution to _The Big Four_ crossover was a Tumblr post about a group of secondary characters from each film, thrown together to create a sub-genre that I call _The Little Four_. It consists of Sophie Bennett of _Rise of the Guardians_; Hamish, Harris, and Hubert DuBroch, the Royal Triplets of _Brave_, the Four Sisters of _Tangled_, and any background children from _How to Train Your Dragon_. I shocked myself when the post became insanely popular, and I must thank every single person who is so accepting of this crazy idea. Since I started this mess, I had to take responsibility and write something for it.

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><p>8 February 2014<p>

End
file.